

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MONTEVIDEO 1788

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PINS, UY

SUBJ: PRESIDENTIAL-MILITARY CONFRONTATION-A PHASE ENDED

REFS: MVD 1733 AND PREVIOUS (NOTAL)

1. SUMMARY: THE PRESIDENTIAL-MILITARY CONFRONTATION OF THE WEEK OF MAY 18 ENDED WITHOUT HAVING SETTLED ANYTHING BUT THE MINOR ISSUE WHICH TOUCHED IT OFF. BRIEF PERIOD OF QUIET NOW EXPECTED WHILE MILITARY LOOK INWARD BEFORE DECIDING UPON FURTHER MOVES. CABINET, FOREIGN POLICY AND GOV ECONOMIC PROGRAM REMAIN INTACT AND U.S. INTERESTS UNAFFECTED BY EVENTS.

2. PRESIDENTIAL-MILITARY CONFRONTATION OF WEEK OF MAY 18 APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A STANDOFF WITH NO CLEAR WINNERS OR LOSERS. WITH RESPECT TO ISSUE WHICH TOUCHED IT OFF, FIRING OF EDUARDO PEILE

,
INTERIM PRESIDENT OF NATIONAL MEAT INSTITUTE (INAC), FACE SAVERS PROVIDED FOR BOTH SIDES. PRESIDENT'S MAN ACCEPTED BY MILITARY TO HEAD INAC AND MILITARY-SUPPORTED PEILE REMAINS ON BOARD AT EX-PRESS -- AND PUBLICLY ANNOUNCED-- SUGGESTION OF ARMED FORCES.

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HOWEVER, WE ARE TOLD PARTIES AGREED THAT PEILE WOULD BE DUMPED

QUIETLY IN MONTH OR SO OR MOVED TO ANOTHER POSITION.

3. IT DIFFICULT TO SAY THAT THERE WERE WINNERS OR LOSERS. PRESIDENT REPORTEDLY PLEASED WITH OUTCOME AND AT LEAST SOME GENERALS BELIEVE THEY CAME OUT ON TOP IN WHAT THREATENED TO BECOME A GOLPE BY MEMORANDUM. AT THIS WRITING OUR GUESS IS THAT IF ANYONE WERE SET BACK BY CONFRONTATION IT WAS GENERAL GREGORIO ALVAREZ. ALVAREZ SUCCEEDED IN PUTTING HIS COLLEAGUES IN UNENVIABLE POSITION OF HAVING TO SUPPORT HIM IN CONFRONTATION IN NAME OF ARMED FORCES UNITY. PRESIDENT'S PEOPLE CONVINCED MOST GENERALS DID NOT REALLY UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES WHEN CONFRONTATION EGAN AND THAT RESENTMENT AGAINST ALVAREZ FOR HAVING PUT THEM IN A BOX IS DEEP. ALVAREZ MYTH SUFFERED IN ANOTHER SENSE. IT WAS GENERALLY BELIEVED THAT LAVAREZ HAD BUILT A STRONG, POPULIST ORIENTED SUPPORT BASE AMONG THE YOUNGER OFFICERS. YET, THE FEEDBACK COMING IN FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES INDICATES THAT, IF ANYTHING, THE YOUNGER OFFICERS WERE DISGUSTED WITH THEIR SENIORS FOR HAVING CAUSED A SERIOUS CONFRONTATION WHICH JEOPARDIZED URUGUAY'S IMAGE ABOARD OVER A MINOR ISSUE. HOWEVER, ALVAREZ, ONE OF THE MOST INTELLIGENT GENERALS, HAD BEEN VIRTUALLY COUNTED OUT A MONTH OR SO AGO AND HAS SHOWN GREAT RESILIENCY.

4. THE NEXT MOVE PROBABLY WILL BE AN INTERNAL MATTER WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES WHICH WILL HAVE TO RESOLVE IN-HOUSE DIFFERENCES BEFORE ATTEMPTING ANOTHER MAJOR CONFRONTATION WHICH COULD ALTER THE STRUCTURE OF THE GOVERNMENT. THESE IN-HOUSE DIFFERENCES ARE DEEP. ONE SPLIT INVOLVES THE GENERALS WITH CRISTI AND ALVAREZ MAJOR PROTAGONISTS. ANOTHER INVOLVES THE YOUNGER OFFICERS MENTIONED ABOVE AND STILL ANOTHER A GROUP OF RIGHT WING COLONELS WHO CRITICIZED THE GENERALS FOR NOT HAVING GONE FAR ENOUGH. BORDABERRY WILL REMAIN ALOOF FROM ALL INTRA-MILITARY SQUABBLES.

5. THE PRESIDENT, WE ARE TOLD, EXPECTS TO HAVE A MONTH OR TWO BEFORE AGAIN BEING FACED WITH NEW MILITARY DEMANDS. FIRST, THE MILITARY HAS TO COME TO TERMS WITH ITSELF. SECOND, ATTENTIONS ARE BEING FOCUSED INCREASINGLY ON PREPARATIONS FOR BORDABERRY'S JUNE 12 MEETING WITH BRAZILIAN PRESIDENT GEISEL, A MEETING CONSIDERED
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IMPORTANT BY THE URUGUAYANS.

6. REFERENCES ARE BEING MADE TO THE NEXT STAGE BECAUSE BASIC ISSUES BETWEEN BORDABERRY AND THE GENERALS HAVE NOT BEEN RESOLVED. THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL MATTER AWAITING RESOLUTION IS THE MILITARY'S DEMAND THAT BORDABERRY PUBLICLY CLARIFY HIS POSITION WITH RESPECT TO 1976 ELECTIONS AND THE PERIOD THEREAFTER, INCLUDING AN INDICATION

AS TO HIS WILLINGNESS TO REMAIN IN THE PRESIDENCY UNTIL 1980. THIS WAS RAISED PRIOR TO THE PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO PARAGUAY, CAME UP AGAIN DURING TH CONFRONTATION, AND LEFT FOR DECISION LATER. A SOURCE CLOSE TO THE PRESIDENT TOLD THE ADCM LATE ON MAY 28 THAT BORDABERRY DOES NOT YET WANT TO SAY ANTHING PUBLIC WITH RESPECT TO ELECTONS. HE WANTS TO WAIT UNTIL EARLY 76. THIS SAME SOURCE CONFIRMED OTHER REPORTS THAT WHILE CABINET CHANES WERE DISCUSSED DURING THE CONFRONTATION, NOE WERE REQUESTED OR OFFERED.

7. AS IS APPARENT, NO IMPORTANT GOVERNMENTAL CHANES CAME OUT OF A WEEK OF NEGOTIATIONS. IMPORTANT U.S. INTERSTS HAVE NOT BEEN AFFECTED. URUGUAYAN FOREIGN POLICY REMAINS UNCHANED, KEY MINISTERS REMAIN IN THEIR POSTS AND GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC PROGRAM NOT ONLY SURVIVED BUT ALSO WAS EXPRESSLY GIVEN A VOTE OF CONFIDENCE BY THEMILITARY.

8. WITH RESPECT TO THEROLE OF OTHERS IN THE WEEK'S EVENTS, WE HAVE AS YET UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT BLANCO LEADER WILSON FERREIRA ARRIVED IN BUENOS AIRES FROM LIMA DURING THE CONFRONTATION TO MEET THRE WITH HIS PARTY DIRECTORATE, SOME OF WHOM, AT LEAST, HAD OFFERED TO SUPPORT GENERAL ALVAREZ FOR THE PRESIDENCY. WE ARE FOLLOWING UP AND WILL REPORT ON THIS. IT COULD HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANT. A SUBJECT OF MUCH PUBLIC CONJECTURE WAS THE ROLE OF THE BRAZILIAN EMBASSY WHICH THE RUMOR MILL ACCUSED OF SUPPORTING A MILITARY GOLPE. THE BRAZILIANS, AND MOST OTHER OBSERVERS, BELIEVE THE RUMORS TO HAVE BEEN ORIGINATED BY THE ARENTINES. BRAZILIAN EMBASSY SOURCES HAVE DENIED BITTERLY TO US THAT THEY PLAYED ANY ROLE WHATSOEVER IN THE RECENT EVENTS. IF THE RUMORS WERE OF ARGENTINE ORGIN, THEY PROBABLY WERE PLANTED BECAUSE THE ARGENTINES SEIZED AN OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK THEIR LEADING RIVAL IN URUGUAY WITH A CREDIBLE STORY.
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